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BEAMS FROM THE TALMUD.

By Rabbi I. Stern of Stuttgart.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.

I. MANKIND.

Ben Soma said: How much labor must the first men have endured, before they could eat a single piece of bread! They themselves had to plow, sow, reap, bind in sheaves, thresh, winnow, grind knead and bake; then for the first time they could eat bread. But I find my bread and many costly viands and beverages without much labor. And how must the first men have been perplexed, to obtain simply a plain dress! They had to shear, bleach, scour, spin, weave, dye, cut and sew. But I find my proper clothing ready, and need only to put it on.

*

Who is wise? He who learns from everybody.
Who is strong? He who conquers himself.
Who is rich? He who is contented with his own.
Who is honorable? He who honors men.

*

Rabbi Jochanan ben Sakkai had five disciples: Eliezer, Joshua, Joses, Simon, Eleazar. One day the master said: What is the highest good, to which men are to aspire?—Eliezer said: A good eye. Joshua: A good friend. Joses: A good neighbor. Simon: Prudence. Eleazar: A good heart. At this the master said: Eleazar has given the best answer; for a good heart includes all good things in itself.

*

The vulgar fear not sin.
The ignorant cannot be devout.
The timorous cannot learn.
The passionate cannot teach.
He who carries on much business, will not become wise.

*

If I myself care not for myself, who cares for me?
If I am alone, what am I?
If not now, then when?

*

Men are known by three things, their cup, their purse, their passion.

*

Look not upon the bottle, but upon its contents.

*

Regard no one lightly, and esteem nothing as impossible: Every man has his time, everything has its place.

*

Rabbi Eliezer ben Simon was riding one day with a joyous pride along the bank of a river; for he had just come out of the lecture-room, where he had distinguished himself by his learning. There met him a fabulously deformed man. He saluted the Rabbi in a friendly manner; the latter did not return the salute, but insolently cried out: How repugnant you are, my friend! Are all your townsmen as deformed as you? The stranger replied: I know not; but I am going to the Master who created me, and will say to him: What a detestable vessel thou hast made! The rabbi saw his mistake. Instantly he dismounted his beast, prostrated himself before the man and begged his forgiveness; but the latter, offended, went on his way. Nevertheless, the rabbi rode after him to his home, and once more implored his forgiveness. At the persuasion of his townsmen, the diseased man was moved. I forgive you, said he, on condition, that you never again repeat such language. Immediately the rabbi hastened into the academy and preached: Let man always be lowly as the reed and not haughty as the cedar.

*

The imperial princess at Rome once said to the hunchbacked rabbi, Joshua ben Chananyah: An abundance of wisdom in a deformed body! Hereupon the rabbi asked her, in what her father's wine was preserved. In earthen jugs, answered the princess. How, signified the former, should an emperor not preserve his wine in golden casks? The princess understood; she ordered her slave to pour the wine into golden pitchers; but in a short time it had become sour. Thou hast given me bad advice, she said to the rabbi, when he came again into her presence. But he replied: It was only the answer to your derision: An abundance of wisdom in a deformed body!

*

Rabbi Simon ben Gamaliel once stood upon the pinnacle of the temple, and discovered a Pagan woman of great beauty. Then he cried out: How beautiful are thy works, O God!—Rabbi Akiba burst into tears at the sight of the beautiful wife of Turnus Rufus. I weep, said he, because such beauty must one day moulder to dust.

P. M. I.

PSALM CLI.

This simple and beautiful psalm does not exist in Hebrew, but is found in Greek, in some psalters of the LXX, headed "A Psalm of David when he had slain Goliath." St. Athanasius mentions it with praise, in his address to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms, and in the Synopsis of Holy Scripture. It was versified in Greek in A. D. 360, by Apollonius Alexandrinus.

1. I was small among my brethren;
   And growing up in my father's house I kept my father's sheep.
2. My hands made the organ;
   And my fingers shaped the psaltery.
3. And who declared unto my Lord!
   He, the Lord, He heard all things.
4. He sent His angel, and He took me from my father's sheep;
   He anointed me in mercy with His unction.
5. Great and goodly are my brethren;
   But with them the Lord was not well pleased.
6. I went to meet the stranger;
   And he cursed me by all his idols.
7. But I smote off his head with his own drawn sword;
   And I blotted out the reproach of Israel.

—Baring-Gould.